



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



Testimony in Favor of Bill 294 AAC Individuals With Intellectual Disability March 2, 2016 Submitted by Chris Blake, appointed member CT Council on Developmental Disabilities

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and Members of the Committee, my name is Chris Blake, I live in East Haven, and I am submitting testimony in favor of SB 294 , An Act Concerning Individuals with Intellectual Disability.

I am a member of the Council on Developmental Disabilities, appointed as an advocate to the Council by Governor Malloy in 2013. The Council's mission is to support the full inclusion of people with disabilities in their communities. I support SB 294 because it is consistent with our mission.

Section One of this bill addresses the issues of many families who are on the waiting list. The issues facing families on the waiting list are serious. DDS must be required to give families basic information about their actual place on the waiting list and to give them clear information about what that means. Some families have been on this so-called list for years, with no information coming from DDS about when, if ever, they will actually receive supports. They are also often given conflicting or confusing information about this list. Additionally, there needs to be good dialogue and a more formal process to decide about the long term impact of the choices they make. This should be a transparent process. Parents on the waiting list are often desperate for services and may not understand the long term consequences of the choices they make. Additionally DDS must report on those people who are waiting for day and employment services—two areas that are really important to people with disabilities. The legislature must stay informed about the needs of people with disabilities and whether those needs are being met in these two very important areas that not only impact our lives, but impact the economy of our state. If we are working, we pay taxes, and we need fewer supports.

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Section Two of the bill talks about closure of the institutions, and as a Council member, I am glad to see this in the bill. The Council has been working, through our 2020 campaign, to close these institutions since November of 2014. State operated institutions cannot be ethically justified. These are outdated, expensive and segregated places that have no place in today's society. Eighteen states now have no institutions. I am pleased to see that the Council is mentioned as a stakeholder in process, along with the Arc Connecticut and others. But it is equally important for families and individuals on the waiting list to also have a role in this planning process, and they should also be named. After all, this really is about using all our resources fairly, and these families have been forgotten too many times.

I don't really understand section three of the bill, and it concerns me that this section appears to be stating that many people could be losing services in the future. I think it's very confusing, and I am not sure how private funding would replace any of these lost services mentioned in this section.

I do want to thank the organizations and families who worked with the legislature to bring these critical issues to your attention. Thank you for this bill, and urge you to make a few changes, but support it.

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